



California Farmland Conservancy Program

Focus on Farmland

Volume 1, Number 2

Newsletter of the CFCP
October 2002

This edition of Focus on Farmland features:

- projects recently completed with CFCP funding,
- updates on state & federal funding,
- GIS mapping of agricultural conservation easements,
- updates on legislation related to farmland conservation, and
- the staff behind the CFCP.

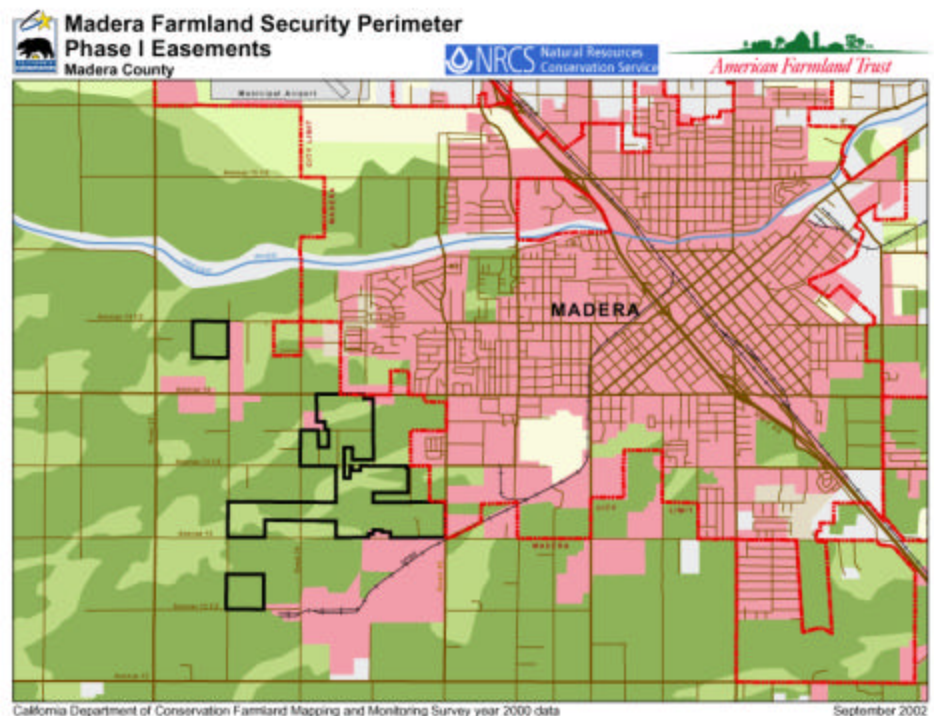
Read on!

Madera Farmland Security Perimeter Safeguards Central Valley Ag Land

Eight landowners have banded together to begin to create a “farmland security perimeter” on the western edge of the City of Madera, permanently protecting 440 acres of farmland in the Central Valley with agricultural conservation easements. The protected vineyards and field crops will discourage westward growth of the city and greatly reduce development pressure on thousands of additional acres. By protecting this large region of prime agricultural land on the western edge of the city, the farmland security perimeter will encourage Madera’s future growth onto less productive land to the east and north.

The project marks the first time in California that so many adjacent landowners have joined together on a simultaneous agricultural conservation easement transaction. The American Farmland Trust purchased the agricultural conservation easements from the landowners and facilitated their collaborative effort. Some of the easements will be coheld by the Madera Resource Conservation District. The project received the full support of both the city and county of Madera.

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The recent easement acquisitions west of Madera. Also a sample of the agricultural conservation easement maps that FMMP is preparing.

Grants from the California Farmland Conservancy Program and the federal Farmland Protection Program made the purchases possible. The CFCP grant of \$2.2 million is the program's largest to date. The \$1.1 million in federal funding was also the largest agricultural conservation easement grant the FPP has awarded in California. The landowners involved in the transactions donated \$1.25 million to the effort by accepting purchase prices below the appraised fair market value for the easements. To view the complete press release, visit www.conservation.ca.gov.

Solano Land Trust Closes on Largest Contiguous Block of Farmland Funded to Date by CFCP

In August, the Solano Land Trust completed its acquisition of two agricultural conservation easements on the adjoining Perry Anderson and McCormack Home Ranches. Comprising 3,805 acres total, or almost six square miles, this acquisition is the largest contiguous block of farmland protected to date with funding through the CFCP. Located in Solano County near the Delta city of Rio Vista, the properties include 2 ¼ miles of frontage along the Sacramento River. A \$1.28 million CFCP grant was made to the Solano Land Trust for acquiring an agricultural conservation easement on one of the properties. The landowners donated the agricultural conservation easement on the other property.

The McCormack Home Ranch has been owned by the McCormack family since the late 1800s. The properties are located in the Montezuma Hills, one of the most productive dry-farmed regions in the state. Barley, safflower and alfalfa are grown on the properties, and the grain stubble is seasonally grazed with sheep. The area is underlain with the Rio Vista Gas Field, the largest natural gas reserve in California.

Only 60 miles from San Francisco, Rio Vista has the fifth fastest rate of growth of all cities in California (Department of Finance Demographic Research Unit). More than half of the Perry Anderson Ranch is within Rio Vista's sphere of influence. These easements will effectively discourage urban development to the south onto productive farmland.

Funding Updates: CFCP Grant Funding

The recently approved state budget provides \$11.7 million in new CFCP grant funding for Fiscal Year 2002-03. As in the past, the CFCP continues to accept grant applications on a continuous basis (i.e., there is no specific application deadline). The existing CFCP Request for Grant Applications (RFGA) remains current and can be downloaded from the CFCP's website: http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/cfcp/funding/request_grant_app.htm. Hard copies of the RFGA may be requested by contacting the CFCP directly. As always, grant applicants are encouraged to contact CFCP staff for an early consultation when considering grant requests.

Federal Farmland Protection Program Awards \$2.45 Million to California

On September 6, the USDA announced the allocation of \$48 million for the Farmland Protection Program (FPP) for the 2002 federal fiscal year. The funding, authorized by the 2002 Farm Bill, needed to be committed to specific conservation easement transactions by September 30, 2002. The news release can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/news/releases/2002/09/0371.htm>.

Of the 32 states receiving funding, California received \$2,450,500 (approximately five percent of the total funding for the year). More than \$11 million in FPP funding requests were made to the California State Office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), which administers the FPP. More than \$9 million of those requests came through proposals that were also seeking funding from the CFCP. Four easement projects were selected for funding by the NRCS, and they will receive matching funding from the CFCP. The projects are located in Monterey, Santa Clara and Shasta counties.

The availability of \$100 million in additional funding through FPP in the 2003 federal fiscal year will likely be announced in early 2003. The CFCP will continue to play a coordinating role in submitting applications for federal funding for proposals that also seek CFCP funding. If you have a project that may be a candidate for state and federal funding, contact the CFCP as soon as possible.

FMMP Project Maps Agricultural Conservation Easements

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), which documents changes in agricultural land use in California, has undertaken a project to map agricultural conservation easements. The project is funded by Proposition 13, the Safe Drinking, Clean Water, Watershed Protection and Flood Protection Act, a \$1.97 billion water bond passed in 2000. The easement mapping project is intended to monitor trends in farmland conservation for farmers, planners, legislators, policy makers, environmentalists, and educators. The project is dynamic, adding data on parcels as easements are established.

Forty-two organizations were surveyed; 20 have provided data about agricultural conservation easement projects. The data have been incorporated into a Geographical Information System (GIS) database with statewide coverage. Current data include more than 250 parcels in the Central Valley and coastal counties from Sonoma to Santa Barbara. For those organizations that provided data, draft easement maps will be returned for review by the submitting organization in order to confirm the accuracy of the data.

Get on the map! If your organization holds agricultural conservation easements and your data have not been incorporated, submit your agricultural easement information to Judith Santillan at jsantill@consrv.ca.gov. Please include the following information for each easement: assessor's parcel map, project name, easement holder, establishment date, the nature of the easement (i.e. agricultural, habitat, etc.), the term (i.e. perpetual), and the funding source(s).

Updates on Legislation:

Funding for Conservation Easements on Grazing Land and Oak Woodlands

Senate Bill 984 (Chapter 984/2002) creates the California Rangeland, Grazing Land, and Grassland Protection Program within the Wildlife Conservation Board to provide grant funds for the voluntary acquisition of conservation easements on these resources. The enacted legislation appropriates \$19.2 million in funding from Proposition 40 (the California Clean Water, Clean Air, Safe Neighborhood Parks, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2002). Additionally, Assembly Bill 52 (Chapter 983/2002) appropriates \$4.8 million from Proposition 40 to the new Oak Woodland Conservation Program, also being administered by the Wildlife Conservation Board. For information on these programs, contact Marilyn Cundiff at the Wildlife Conservation Board (mcundiff@dfg.ca.gov). To view SB 984 and AB 52 in their entirety, access the Legislative Counsel's website at: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>

CFCP Legislative Enhancements

As reported in *Focus on Farmland's* last edition, Senate Bill 1864 included a number of changes impacting the California Farmland Conservancy Program. Senate Bill 1864 has since been enacted (Chapter 616/2002), and provides clarification of a number of issues concerning the awarding and administration of CFCP grants. The legislation also removes a number of technical ambiguities within the statute. Following is a brief summary of some of the more significant enhancements being made in SB 1864:

- Clarifies that CFCP planning/policy grants may be used for purposes including, but not limited to, development and evaluation of local or regional land conservation strategies and potential acquisition projects (Public Resources Code (PRC) section 10230.5).
- Enables grantees to count up to 50 percent of contributions to an agricultural conservation easement monitoring endowment for a specific property as part of the required grant matching funds (PRC section 10233 (a)).
- Allows grant applicants to submit grant applications *prior* to obtaining necessary resolutions of support from local governments, thereby simplifying the application process (PRC section 10234 and 10251). The local government resolution is no longer a grant eligibility criterion, but rather must be attained prior to the CFCP's final approval of a grant.
- Clarifies appraisal issues, including the requirement that the total price of an acquisition shall not exceed its fair market value, as determined by a qualified appraisal. The Department of Conservation, which administers the CFCP, may conditionally approve grant applications prior to completion of final appraisals, provided that acceptable appraisals are received prior to disbursement of any grant funds (PRC section 10260).
- Specifies that many of the same details that apply to agricultural conservation easement grants shall also apply to short duration fee simple acquisitions. Since its inception, the CFCP has had the authority to provide grants for short duration fee simple acquisition of specific properties; this change provides further direction for administration of such grants.

SB 1864 takes effect on January 1, 2003. To view SB 1864 in its entirety, access the Legislative Counsel's website at: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/bilinfo.html>

In Brief:

Upgrades to the Information Superhighway – If you haven't taken a look online recently, the **CFCP's website** is better than ever. In addition to incorporating the Governor's snazzy new design, the website is reorganized and now includes brief information on all projects funded by the CFCP. Visit the website at www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/cfcp.

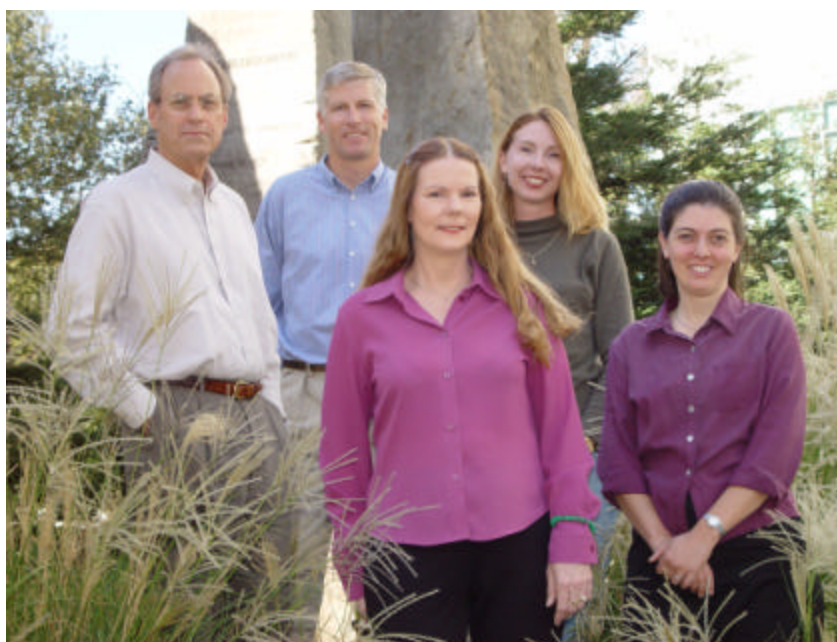
California Farmland Conservancy Program 2003 "Protecting Farmland for Future Generations" calendars will be available before the holiday season. Please contact Deanna Dobrinen (ddobrine@consrv.ca.gov, 916-324-0850) with requests for calendars. They are available at no cost to our friends in agricultural land conservation, and quantities can be provided to organizations that will make them available to agricultural landowners. Once again the calendars feature beautiful photos of California agriculture, as well as information about agricultural conservation easements and easement projects. Please contact Deanna with your requests for bulk orders as soon as possible.

Introducing the CFCP Staff

Whether we've spoken to you on the phone, emailed you, or met you in person, there's more to our staff than our business card titles! Take a moment to get to know us better.

Chuck Tyson is the Program Manager of the CFCP and has been with the program since its inception in 1996. He is a graduate of the University of California, Davis, where he earned a PhD degree in Soil Science. In addition to many other activities, he volunteers his time on urban forestry projects, including the care and pruning of young street trees. Chuck is an avid gardener, enjoys building furniture, beekeeping, and backpacking and camping with his family throughout California. Currently he spends much of his free time with the California Agricultural Leadership Program as a member of Class XXXII.

Catherine Caldwell has been with the Department of Conservation since 1997, initially working with the Williamson Act program, and eventually becoming CFCP's Lead Project Manager. She grew up on a farm in North Carolina, and started working on conservation easements in Wyoming. She earned a M.S. degree from UC Davis focusing on agricultural and environmental policy. She volunteers with an organization that rescues retired Greyhound dogs from race tracks and finds them loving homes. In her spare time she also has become an avid skier, and enjoys home improvement and Caribbean cooking.



CFCP staff (l-r): Robert Cacciari, Chuck Tyson, Deanna Dobrinen, Catherine Caldwell, and Deniz Tuncer. (Photo by Max Flanery)

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Deniz Tuncer joined our staff almost two years ago after returning to California from Washington, D.C. She has a double major in math and anthropology from UC Berkeley. She has worked for several non-profit organizations, including a year stint in Indonesia with a U.S. nonprofit organization that helped local farmers by providing the expertise of U.S. volunteers. Deniz is the CFCP contact person for Central Coast and Bay Area counties. She recently climbed her first 14,000-foot mountain peak. In her spare time, she enjoys cooking and gardening.

Robert Cacciari joined the CFCP staff last summer, from the Department of Transportation. Here, Robert reviews appraisals and assists the grant managers with their numerous projects. He earned a B.A. degree in economics from the California State University, Sacramento, and has a wealth of experience managing projects and appraising agricultural properties from his tenure in private practice and in the banking industry. Robert loves snow skiing, tennis, hiking and backpacking. His favorite travel spot is Southern France.

Deanna Dobrinen has been the support staff for the CFCP since May 2001. She enjoys working with a great group of people and we're all very pleased to have her. She and her husband David recently celebrated their first wedding anniversary. She receives a lot of joy from baking, so if you are ever in our office and see cookies on the counter, Deanna says, "Consider some yours!"

In addition to our full time staff, CFCP and CFCP grant recipients also work with **Steve Oliva** and **Stasia Baskerville** from the Department's Legal Office, and **Don Drysdale** from the Department's Public Affairs Office.

We hope you've found the Focus on Farmland useful and informative. Please contact us with any questions or ideas you have for future editions.

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